



MINUTES
Environmental Sustainability Commission
Regular Meeting of September 4, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Moore, Obata, O'Donnell, Rasheed, and Vice Chair Swaminathan.

Oral Communications: Commissioner Rennels, who was unable to attend the meeting, requested that City Staff inform the Commission that the Warm Springs BART Station will include 36 electric vehicle charging stations as well as a solar PV array to power the new station operations.

Approval of Minutes: Regular meeting minutes of June 5, 2014 were approved unanimously by the Commission, with the correction of two spelling errors.

Vice Chair Swaminathan took a moment to recognize the guests in the room and asked them to introduce themselves and their interest in the meeting: former Mayor and Tri City Ecology Center Chair Gus Morrison, LEAF Board Member and CNHP Garden Project Manager Mia Mora, local student Abi Shiva, and community member Jane Mueller were all in attendance specifically in relation to Agenda Item 5.3 – Georgetown University Energy Prize.

Vice Chair Swaminathan requested that Item 5.2 – Presentation and Feedback Session of the City of Fremont "Sustainability" webpages – be moved to the end of the agenda or postponed to make room for a lengthy discussion about the Georgetown University Energy Prize. Staff agreed to discuss the item at the end of the meeting if time permitted, or to skip the item if time ran out.

5.1 Make-a-Difference-Day:

Fremont Environmental Services staff Barbara Silva presented to the Commission on the Make-a-Difference-Day event planned for Sabercat Creek from 9am to noon on Saturday, October 25, 2014. As a background on the project, she explained that the City of Fremont was awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the Resource Agency California River Parkway Program for creek restoration and other improvements to Sabercat Creek. The project provides critical creek and habitat restoration, reduces erosion, greatly improves public access by connecting two pedestrian access links under Paseo Padre Parkway, provides safety vehicle and ADA access, and repairs existing trails along Sabercat Creek. The project is estimated at \$2.2 million with additional funding from the Clean Water Protection Fee and Alameda County Flood Control District.

Last year, the Environmental Sustainability Commission assisted with Make-a-Difference-Day efforts at Sabercat Creek, providing feedback that additional tools were needed and requested that debris be hauled during the day of the event rather than left in a pile. This year, additional tools will be available, and the online registration form will provide recommendations for volunteers regarding what to wear and what to bring, including additional tools if they have any. Barbara said that she is looking into the ability of City Maintenance staff to pick up debris during the event. Event activities will include weeding, removal of invasive plants, and native tree planting. The Commission was enthusiastic to attend, and will send the event invitation out to their respective groups when it is available.

5.2 Presentation and Feedback Session of City of Fremont “Sustainability” webpages:

Due to time constraints, the Board decided to skip this item.

5.3 Georgetown University Energy Prize (GUEP):

Vice Chair Swaminathan introduced the Georgetown University Energy Prize (GUEP) effort to the Commission and guests, explaining how it is a two year competition amount communities from 2015 through 2016 to reduce community-wide energy usage by the greatest percentage in the residential, municipal, and public school sectors. The top 10 communities that reduce energy usage by the greatest percentage per capita will be selected as finalists, and then will be judged based on a combination of additional factors as follows: performance (25%), innovation (15%), replicability (15%), widespread community engagement (10%), educational efforts (10%), continued future performance (10%), and overall quality/success (15%). He explained that in order to get to the top 10, Fremont must make significant energy reductions, but that in order to take home the cash prize of \$5M, Fremont must approach this effort strategically, thoughtfully, and at a large scale.

Vice Chair Swaminathan discussed the Commission’s role in providing a letter of support for the application package and assisting in outreaching to community organizations to solicit their support, and commended Sustainability Coordinator Rachel DiFranco’s role in assembling the application package (submitted July 1). He then asked the Commission to consider their level of commitment to this effort moving forward.

Sustainability Coordinator Rachel DiFranco then discussed the GUEP timeline in further detail, explaining that the next step in the process prior to the actual competition is to develop an Energy Plan, due November 10. As one of 52 “quarterfinalists”, Fremont will be judged on its Energy Plan’s strategy and viability. After reviewing all plans, The GUEP judging panel will then invite communities with the best plans to the “semifinalist” stage to compete in the 2 year challenge commencing January 1, 2015 and concluding December 31, 2016. Fremont therefore has the next two months to develop its Energy Plan, and Rachel will be taking a lead role in creating this plan but will be soliciting the assistance and feedback of the Commission, groups that issued Letters of Support for the GUEP effort, and other interested community members throughout the process.

Vice Chair Swaminathan discussed his idea of a school-based energy challenge. PG&E currently provides community-wide aggregate level data for residential energy usage to the City of Fremont. The City has submitted a data request to find out if energy usage data can be aggregated at the school attendance boundary level. PG&E has informed the City that while school attendance boundary level data is not available, they will be able to provide zip code (or zip +2) level data, and/or census block level data. The idea is that this more neighborhood level data could be used to show community members what their local area average per capita energy usage looks like compared to other neighborhoods, and incentivize them through a local competition run out of each school to reduce their energy usage.

Sustainability Coordinator Rachel DiFranco added a few other potential strategies that the City has thought up, including a group solar purchase (Solarize Fremont) effort, FUSD and City energy upgrade projects (solar PV, LED streetlights, energy and water efficiency measures), engaging the local cleantech sector through energy demonstration projects, promoting electric vehicle ownership, and encouraging “Zero Net Energy” buildings, and hosting Solar/Energy fairs/expos.

Vice Chair Swaminathan then asked the Commission and meeting guests to provide their input on the GUEP competition and strategies:

- Commissioner Rasheed stated that this is a breakthrough opportunity for the entire community to become more environmentally aware, and that we must approach the Energy Planning process in a way to get everyone involved. Commissioner Rasheed also talked about the use of social media in this effort: most young people are getting their news/information from Facebook, Twitter, etc., so marketing efforts must utilize these online platforms to the greatest extent. He said that every school has a Green Club at this point, and that engaging the green clubs will be important.
- Commissioner Moore said that the “biggest bang for the buck” is in retrofitting existing housing, not developing new energy efficient housing. The challenges with home energy retrofitting is that even though a number of people are generally interested, 1) they don’t know where to start, 2) they don’t have access to the money required to do the work, and 3) they want to get the most out of the money that they do spend. Commissioner Moore suggested that community groups such as Kiwanis, Rotary, ethnic groups, and faith-based organizations be engaged early in this process as “trusted messengers” for the effort, and suggested that we work closely with the Chamber of Commerce to offer an energy or solar fair.
- Mia Mora of LEAF inquired about how the GUEP effort would be funded, to which Rachel DiFranco said through her staff time. She also asked what we would be getting with the \$5M if we were to win the competition, to which Vice Chair Swaminathan responded that still needs to be defined and Rachel DiFranco explained that it would need to go toward future community energy efforts. Mia then stated that Fremont has a very unique community in that it is diverse with a number of different ethnic communities, with an altruistic population dedicated to environmentalism and interested in finding out how they can make a difference. She said that educational efforts would be key, and engaging the schools and non-profits in outreach efforts was the only way to broadcast the message community-wide. She suggested incorporating environmental components

into each City-event during the competition phase, and also suggested the concept of supporting a sustainability hub at the California Nursery Historic Park with the prize money.

- Jane Mueller said that a community engagement effort would be key in making this a viable effort, and recalled how the “Celebrate Fremont” 50th Anniversary message in 2006 was a key theme in the City’s efforts and resulted in a widespread level of community engagement.
- Abi Shiva talked about branding, stating that a well-know and catchy brand/slogan would be integral. He explained how Coca-Cola has been able to use branding like “Coke Zero” to sell create an internationally known best-selling beverage that is really just fizzy brown sugar water. He suggested coming up with something similarly catching for Fremont.
- Gus Morrison of TCEC said that people will only want to reduce their energy usage if they are going to get something out of it. He said that there needs to be both little and big efforts/projects that individuals can do to save energy, and that those efforts need to be grabbing in order to have any effect. Replicability of the effort is also key – if the effort is effective, it will be able to be replicated at a larger level. He suggested that the prize money could go toward schools.
- Vice Chair Swaminathan talked about connecting with the Green Teams at schools to run a school-based energy challenge.

The Commission then discussed ways to participate in the Energy Planning process. The Commission determined that they would prefer not to form an official subcommittee, but instead will provide feedback on energy reduction strategies that are of interest to them.

The Commission agreed to hold a special meeting before the next quarterly meeting so that they would be able to provide official feedback on the Energy Plan draft before it is submitted to the GUEP judging panel. This meeting will be called for Thursday, October 23 from 4-6pm.

5.4 Staff Updates:

Sustainability Coordinator Rachel DiFranco updated the Commission on following topics:

- The Fremont Energy Challenge will conclude on September 30. To date, 200 Fremont residents have signed up for the Home Energy Analyzer tool, raising \$1,000 for the Fremont Libraries. On average, Fremont residents using the HEA are saving \$146 a year on their energy bills, with an annual reduction of 290 kWh of electricity and 116 therms of natural gas.
- The California Youth Energy Services Program concluded the first week of August, serving over 250 Fremont households. Final energy saving statistics will be shared with the Commission once a final report is received from Rising Sun Energy Center.
- Fremont hosted an Electric Vehicle Ride-and-Drive event through the Experience Electric campaign on Saturday, August 9 with over 500 event attendees and 300 vehicle test drives. This was one of the most successful Experience Electric events in the Bay Area, and Fremont will be considered for additional events in the future.

- The California Nursery Historic Park Master Plan second public meeting will take place on Thursday, September 25 at the City of Fremont Teen Center.

5.5 Commissioner Announcements – None

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel DiFranco", written over a horizontal line.

Rachel DiFranco
Sustainability Coordinator